

# A Baldrige Primer

Created by U.S. public law, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award is the USA's premier annual award for business excellence. It was begun in 1988, and named to commemorate a former U.S. Secretary of Commerce. In 1994 the Washington State Quality Award was established. It is patterned after the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and utilizes this model as the primary standard for performance evaluation and improvement.

The Baldrige system is focused on customers and processes. It is all about identifying and improving (continually) key organizational processes in the interest of delivering better value to customers; that is, building a business around customer needs, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty.

To do so, the Baldrige system recognizes that it is hard to create satisfied customers with a dissatisfied staff, so Baldrige organizations put 50% of their efforts into building and retaining skilled, motivated, productive and happy workforces and 50% of its emphasis on improving process outcomes.

In short, the approach facilitates best practices and process improvement with two goals:

- Delivering ever-improving value to customers, and
- Improving overall operational performance.

## The Eleven Core Values and Seven Criteria

Baldrige is a disciplined approach built around cycles of learning consistent with better communication, more cooperation, joint diagnosis, and greater sharing.

### The eleven (11) Core Values are:

- Customer driven quality
- Public responsibly and citizenship
- Quality leadership
- Management by fact
- Valuing employees
- Continuous improvement and learning
- Fast responses
- Design quality and failure prevention
- Long range views of the future
- Partnership development
- Focus on results

### Seven (7) Criteria Categories and Items

1. Leadership
2. Strategic Planning
3. Customer and Market Focus
4. Measurement, Analysis and Knowledge Management
5. Human Resource Focus
6. Process Management
7. Results

Finally, a quote from a previous Baldrige Award recipient:

*"The value in the Baldrige process is understanding how the criteria apply to your company and the processes within your company. The Baldrige is one of many templates to use to evaluate your situation and plan your future course. No one can tell you what your company has to do – the value comes in discovering it for yourself."*